SONGS FOR THE NEW AGE

JAMES OPPENHEIM

DISCARD

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_S0-EAO-435

SONGS FOR THE NEW AGE

SONGS FOR THE NEW AGE

BY

JAMES OPPENHEIM

WITHDRAWN
Eastern Oregon University
From EOU Library
La Grande, OR 97850

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1914

Copyright, 1914, by
THE CENTURY CO.

Published, October, 1914

For the term "polyrhythmical poetry," which exactly describes the form of these songs, I am indebted to my friend, the poet, CLEMENT RICHARDSON WOOD.

For arduous and absorbing help—

To the three GLEASONS, LEILA, HELEN AND ARTHUR:
To the two UNTERMEYERS, JEAN and LOUIS:
To MRS. ANNA GLEN STODDARD, DOUGLAS Z. DOTY and the devoted CENTURY CO. generally.

For equal help and other help I dedicate this volume to

DR. BEATRICE M. HINKLE

INDEX OF TITLES

WE DEAD

	PAGE
Before Starting	3
Let Nothing Bind You	5
As to Being Alone	7
Civilization	9
Sin	11
Self	13
When in the Death of Love	15
Where Love Once Was	16
Love and Marriage	17
One Who Loved	19
The Haunted Heart	20
The Clinging Arms	21
Property	22
The Morning Stars	23
The Slave	24
The Laugher	25
Patterns	26
The Paradox	28
Waiting	29
The Descending Hour	30
Sickliness	31
Æsthetes	32

PAGE
The Pure 33
Abide the Adventure 39
Take Physic, Pomp! 41
If it Comes to This 42
The Weak 44
The Hag 45
Priests 46
Where Bides Brotherhood? 47
The Rock 48
Action 49
Brotherhood 50
Transfigurations 51
The Millennium 53
Funerals 55
At Forty 56
The Blame 57
Crime 58
The Children 59
Too Human 61
Jottings:
New Born 62
Listen 62
The Sea is Itself 63
The Flame 63
The Sea Whispers 64
Breast of Earth 64
Shh! 65
Two Faces 65
Masters 66
To the Perilous Open 67

PAGE
Bereft 68
Tasting the Earth 70
Renunciation 72
WE DEAD 74

WE LIVING

The Man Speaks 83
The Woman Speaks 85
Beloved 86
Annie 88
The Love-Hour 90
A Woman for the Adventure 92
When a Woman is Wanted 95
Folk-Hunger 97
On the Way to Hell 98
The Bakery Waitress 99
In Talk with a Prostitute 100
The Cup of Dew 101
The Lonely Child 102
Not Overlooked 103
The New Babe 104
Had I the Wings 105
The Body 106
The Sun-Children 107
Sun, with a Million Eyes 109
One Flesh 110
At Home 111
I Could Write the Psalms Again 112
Praise 113
Dancers 114

PAGE
Washington Square 115
Sky-Lover 117
The Flocks 118
The Tree 119
Jottings:
Books 120
Arrival and Departure 120
Exile 121
The Edge of the Possible 121
The Baffled One 122
Renewal 123
The Adored One—I to VI 124
Friends 130
As to Being Made a Fool Of 131
The Writer of Many Books 132
The Mighty Hour 134

WE UNBORN

The Mother 139
Death 141
Looking Down on Earth 143
The Runner in the Skies 145
In the Theater 146
The Surveyor 147
A Handful of Dust 148
Assurance 150
The Risen Ones 151
The Dreamer in Me 152
WE UNBORN 153

Index of first lines 163

I

WE DEAD

BEFORE STARTING

IT WAS as if myself sat down beside me,
And at last I could speak out to my dear friend,
And tell him, day after day, of the things that were reshaping me.

He was not afraid to hear my deepest secrets:
He was not shocked at my coarseness and trivialities:
He was prepared for my hours of weakness,—and exaltation.
Neither did he judge me by any one moment:
He knew it as a fragment of the impulse that bore me forward.

Yes, these songs were for myself.
But when they were finished, other selves desired them.

Are there still others who will sit close by and listen?

Is it you? Are you the new friend?
May all be told to you?

LET NOTHING BIND YOU

LET nothing bind you:
If it is Duty, away with it.
If it is Law, disobey it.
If it is Opinion, go against it . . .

There is only one Divinity: Yourself.
Only one God: You . . .

Beware that you worship no false idols:
Take no crust of manners or whimsical desires,
No surface-lusts and frailties,
For the real You hidden down beneath:
But dig . . .
Dig with shovel of will and engine of love and passion,
When the lonely day drags toward the lonelier night,
When betrayal and malice trip you and throw you on yourself,
Dig down to Self, and set God free . . .

Bethink yourself!
God is the Life surging forward creatively,
The swimmer in space whipping up a foam of stars:
Clear your little channel for him . . .
He is you . . .

Then, shall a law be greater than God,
Shall an opinion shrink him,
A duty stay him?

Forth! Let nothing bind you!

AS TO BEING ALONE

WHY did you hate to be by yourself,
And why were you sick of your own company?

Such the question, and this the answer:

I feared sublimity:
I was a little afraid of God:
Silence and space terrified me, bringing the thought of what an irritable clod I was and how soon death would gulp me down . . .

This fear has reared cities:
The cowards flock together by the millions lest they should be left alone for a half hour . . .
With church, theater and school,
With office, mill and motor,
With a thousand cunning devices, and clever calls to each other,
They escape from themselves to the crowd . . .

Oh, I have loved it all:
Snug rooms, the talk, the pleasant feast, the pictures:
The warm bath of humanity in which I relaxed and soaked myself:
And never, I hope, shall I be without it—at times . . .

But now myself calls me . . .
The skies demand me, though it is but ten in the morning:
The earth has an appointment with me, not to be broken . . .
I must accustom myself to the gaunt face of the Sub-time . . .
I must see what I really am, and what I am for,
And what this city is for, and the Earth and the stars in their hurry . . .

To turn out typewriters,
To invent a new breakfast food,
To devise a dance that was never danced until now,
To urge a new sanitation, and a swifter automobile—
Have the life-surging heavens no business but this?

CIVILIZATION

CIVILIZATION!
Everybody kind and gentle, and men giving up their seats in the car for the women . . .
What an ideal!
How bracing!

Is this what we want?
Have so many generations lived and died for this?
There have been Crusades, persecutions, wars, and majestic arts,
There have been murders and passions and horrors since man was in the jungle . . .
What was this blood-toll for?
Just so that everybody could have a full belly and be well-mannered?

But let us not fool ourselves:
This civilization is mostly varnish very thinly laid on . . .
Take any newspaper any morning: scan through it . . .
Rape, murder, villany, and picking and stealing:
The mob that tore a negro to pieces, the men that ravished a young girl:

The safe-blowing gang and the fat cowardly promoter
who stole people's savings . . .
Just scan it through: this news of civilization . . .

Away then, with soft ideals:
Brace yourself with bitterness:
A drink of that biting liquor, the Truth . . .

Let us not be afraid of ourselves, but face ourselves
and confess what we are:
Let us go backward a while that we may go forward:
This is an excellent age for insurrection, revolt, and
the reddest of revolutions . . .

SIN

SIN! sin! sin!
I am sick of your ever worrying what is good and bad,
What is moral and sinful . . .

Go find what you really are . . .
Are you a cave-man underneath your civilized crust?
Or a sensualist or a glutton?
Are you a prostitute deep beneath your enforced monogamy? . . .
What is it really you want?

Better then to be what you are:
Better that, than to live a lie: to be a sweet conformer on the surface,
A respectable citizen and prompt voter,
And yet ever wallowing in secret shame and in sense of sinning!

The real sin is in being divided against yourself:
In wanting one thing and doing another:
For after all you are betraying yourself every moment:
Every moment what you really are is leaking through in some detestable manner . . .

Your desire for women becomes a smutty joke:
Your desire for power becomes bad temper to your inferiors:
Your desire for freedom comes out in mean irritations . . .

Perchance, though, you fear the civilized world would crumble if you let yourself go?
Why, it has already crumbled so far as you are concerned . . .
Do you think that such a dark and oozing creature is civilized?

I can tell you a better way . . .
Be what you are . . .
Then you can take your desires and lift them and harness them . . .
(Men that can harness Niagara can harness gluttony)
The murderer becomes the deft-fingered surgeon:
The child that models smut becomes the sculptor:
The luster after women becomes the music-shaping poet . . .

If you are really so anxious to contribute something to civilization,
Go, and contribute a Man . . .

SELF

ONCE I freed myself of my duties to tasks and
people and went down to the cleansing sea . . .
The air was like wine to my spirit,
The sky bathed my eyes with infinity,
The sun followed me, casting golden snares on the tide,
And the ocean—masses of molten surfaces, faintly
gray-blue—sang to my heart . . .

Then I found myself, all here in body and brain, and
all there on the shore:
Content to be myself: free, and strong, and enlarged:
Then I knew the depths of myself were the depths of
space,
And all living beings were of those depths (my brothers
and sisters)
And that by going inward and away from duties, cities,
street-cars and greetings,
I was dipping behind all surfaces, piercing cities and
people,
And entering in and possessing them, more than a
brother,
The surge of all life in them and in me . . .

So I swore I would be myself (there by the ocean)
And I swore I would cease to neglect myself, but would take myself as my mate,
Solemn marriage and deep: midnights of thought to be:
Long mornings of sacred communion, and twilights of talk,
Myself and I, long parted, clasping and married till death.

WHEN IN THE DEATH OF LOVE.

WHEN in the death of love,
The lovers part,
With saddened quiet in their eyes,
And brief low words,
They do not wonder at the autumn's dying,
Nor at the fall of leaves in the late wind,
Nor wooded hills in winter.

A sadness steeps the sky,
A grayness glistens in the air,
And the Earth's bosom is barren, bleak and brown . . .
When in the death of love
The lovers part.

WHERE LOVE ONCE WAS

WHERE love once was, let there be no hate:
Though they that went as one by night and day
Go now alone,
Where love once was, let there be no hate.

The seeds we planted together
Came to rich harvest,
And our hearts are as bins brimming with the golden plenty:
Into our loneliness we carry granaries of old love . . .

And though the time has come when we cannot sow our acres together
And our souls need diverse fields,
And a tilling apart,
Let us go separate ways with a blessing each for each,
And gentle parting,
And let there be no hate,
Where love once was.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

THE LOVE of man for woman and woman for man,
It is not often love . . .

When the married couple kiss do they drink the music
of each other's souls,
Are they moved to unspeakable reverence and adoration,
Would they renounce the world for the good of the
beloved?

No, kisses are become to them a routine and a duty:
They find each other's bodies at midnight as they find
breakfast in the morning:
And they fill the idle hours with games, shows, rides
and liquor,
All to escape from one another . . .

I have thoughts of a love that might be;
Of a love that is the tender caress of forehead and
cheeks with barely lingering hands:
Of a love that opens the skies at midnight for silent
flight,
Flight far, with wings, in one another's arms . . .

These lovers shall mean as much to each other as they
mean to themselves:
Their tenderness shall melt down irritations:
Their passion shall surcharge tasks with meaning . . .

Not alone shall the man find God in himself,
But in the beloved shall he find him, and in the sight
of the beloved shall he adore him . . .

ONE WHO LOVED

I HAVE heard of a great love:
Of a woman who lived behind the partition in a lawyer's office:
For four years she was hidden with this married man:
She never went out, day or night:
She sat very still, lest a client might overhear her . . .
She sewed and read and translated and waited her lover . . .
His foot had a running sore: tenderly she bathed it.
He was no longer young: no, she was in love with himself . . .
And when he died, and she was discovered, she held up her head and said to us:
"Had I to do it over again: thus would I do it."

Ah, men and women that I know,
How many of you really love each other?

THE HAUNTED HEART

THE haunted heart beseeches me:
It cries to my soul: "Winter has come . . .
With what a withering the wind blows!
And the gray twilight is bleak, though the lamplighter
opens blossoms of white in the air . . .

"Wanderer, return!
Go to where the hearth is warm and the faces crowd:
Hearken to the calling of the children!"

So the haunted heart beseeches me,
But from my heart I turn my face
And continue my lonely journey into the sombre dark.

THE CLINGING ARMS

PUSH off the clinging arms!
There is only death in this strangle-hold; even
if we call it love . . .
The mother who cares too much for her child,
Or the husband for his wife,
They are keeping sheltered and confined what should
be free and hardy, toughened for battle!

Nay, there is no real love in this binding:
It is more often a sense of waste and futility,
And a fierce bickering and quarreling . . .

Shake free!
Know love in freedom: know love in separation:
Give the soul its own self to support it, and take off
your arms!
Do honor to the divinity of another human being
By trusting its power to go alone.

Pierce Library
Eastern Oregon University
1410 L Avenue
La Grande, OR 97850

PROPERTY

MY LIFE does not belong to me:
Neither does it belong to any other person.

Otherwise this chatter and comfort would be sufficient:
This ingrowing family life would be gracious and excellent:
This ease of the rut would suit for a lifetime.

But no: Earth and the heavens are in growth: and the sap is climbing through me:
I must go the way of the skies:
I must feel the star-tendencies and give myself to them:
My life belongs to creation, as a hand belongs to a body.

If then, my day's work done,
Time is allowed for gossip and the choke of families,
Gladly will I take my ease, and smoke, and talk:
But I shall not forget the business of the stars just above the roof of the room.

THE MORNING STARS

OF OLD the psalmist said that the morning stars sing together,
He said the rocks do sing and that the hills rejoice . . .

There be ten million ears in this little city alone . . .
How many have heard the rocks, the hills and the stars?
Not I, not I, as I hurried uptown and downtown!
I heard the wheels of the cars, the chatter of many mouths,
I was in the opera house when it seemed almost to burst with music,
I heard the laughter of children, and the venom of mixed malicious tongues,
But neither the stars I heard nor the muted rocks nor the hills!

David, of Asia, I do hear now . . .
I do hear now the music of the spheres—
I have stepped one step into the desert of Loneliness,
I have turned my ear from the world to my own self . . .
I have paused, stood still, listened.

THE SLAVE

THEY set the slave free, striking off his chains . . .
Then he was as much of a slave as ever.

He was still chained to servility,
He was still manacled to indolence and sloth,
He was still bound by fear and superstition,
By ignorance, suspicion, and savagery . . .
His slavery was not in the chains,
But in himself . . .

They can only set free men free . . .
And there is no need of that:
Free men set themselves free.

THE LAUGHER

STUCK in the mire of many philosophies,
Quicksands of creeds and codes,
I would have come to nothing if my soul had not laughed at me . . .

"Stupid!" he said,
"They speak of what *they* want: but what do *you* want?
Go and question yourself!
Surely the oak does not put forth apples,
Nor the wild-rose many-eyed excellent potatoes!"

Thanks, laugher!
I'm off now down the long road of myself,
The way is clear: I could shout in this wind of freedom,
Even as the sun rejoices that it sheds natural sunbeams,
And the sea that it runs down the tides.

PATTERNS

WOULD you lay a pattern on life and say, thus shall ye live?
I tell you that is a denial of life:
I say that thus we pour our spirits in a mould, and they cake, and die . . .

Thus, indeed, we become the good and the respectable:
Thus we neither lie nor steal, and we commit neither murder nor adultery:
But truly when I look at the holy ones, the pillars of society,
I am fain to go and get drunk or go talk with publicans and sinners . . .

I want to go to the man who quickens me:
I want the gift of life; the flame of his spirit eating along the tinder of my heart:
I want to feel the floodgates within flung open and the tides pouring through me:
I want to take what I am and bring it to fruit.

Quicken me, and I will grow:
Touch me with flame, and the blossoms will open and the fruit appear . . .

Call forth in me a creator, and the god will answer . . .
And then if I commit what you call a sin,
Better so . . .
It will not be a sin: it will be a mere breaking of your patterns:
For the only sin is death, and the only virtue to be altogether alive and your own authentic self.

THE PARADOX

THE wheeling heavens, at this moment wheeling:
The self-absorbed crowds in the street . . .
Gigantic paradox!
If they saw the sublimity of which they are part
They would hurry and hide, like children afraid of the dark.

WAITING

WHY am I restless?
Why do I feel I cannot wait here ten minutes?
From what am I fleeing?

I think I am trying to run from myself:
For the moment I sit still my mind propounds questions,
And presents problems . . .

What of it?
Let it ask its fiercest question: I will listen patiently.
Let it speak its worst: I can endure it.

Really, I have been fleeing from God:
For as soon as I bide with myself, I find that I am biding with Nature:
I am at peace with Earth and the Night and the people around me:
For all life is one:
And the nearest jet of it is right here in this body of mine.

THE DESCENDING HOUR

O MY most bitter mood,
O descending hour, plunge in the crater of myself,
And steep decline among flames, faces, torments, darkness!

I had forgotten—
I had forgotten the madness of life—
The blood-drinker, Time, was forgotten, the love-parter, Death,
And those gibbering ghosts, my ancestors.

Horror bore us: as if the gorge of Night rose, becoming worlds:
And on the inhospitable shores of the planet we were born,
And driven before the elements, and whipped, falling, to death . . .

We rear cities, crowding them with lights:
We try to forget with shows and busy toil:
But under it all the tide, the tide bearing us out.

SICKLINESS

HERE is strength, here,
In my own breast:
If I go whining to the Earth and the stars,
And beseech help of a sweet invisible one in the air about me,
Let me also go where I belong:
Among children and invalids.

Off with this habit of sickness!
Let me puff out my cheeks and blow away the vapors of sadness and downheartedness!
The erect pride shall beget a manner of triumph:
And the bugle of that manner shall call out the regiments of my tented soul.

ÆSTHETES

THE æsthetes read and wax contemptuous or enthusiastic . . .
How many of them live the thing they praise,
And run from the thing they blame?

THE PURE

THERE was a man called pure,
Because neither with hand nor tongue nor visible act
He committed any sin.

His friend took him and peeled him like an onion,
Stripped off, not the clothes of the body, but the clothes of the soul,
And came at last to the dark and secret closet . . .
What did he find?

He found what was in himself and in you and me:
For the sculptor that thumbed so patiently the clay of earth until it was this radiant rosy flesh,
This eyed and tongued body of man and woman,
That sculptor, Life, shaped our bodies out of the bodies of the beasts,
And even so he shaped our souls and hearts out of the souls and hearts of the beasts . . .
Yea, the babe new-born is, in all save the open mind,
(That curious creator within us)
A little crying animal desiring milk from its mother . . .

So the friend found in the pure one the deposit of the dead millenniums:
But alive there: a jungle and swamp of ancestral beasts and savages . . .
Chaos of the earth at creation: the flowing of fires and floods, and the smokes of the craters . . .
Yea, the bloody black history of man was locked in that breast.

He found even hell: the nether region of torment:
Hot cravings, dark lusts, the maniac and the slayer,
The foul breath of the ravening betrayer of women, the steaming hand of the persecutor,
And all things named "carnal" . . .

And at the gate of this deep Hell he found the little devil of Fear pushing back the immortal Sins,
And the little devil of Respectability shuddering that the Burning Ones might escape,
And the devil of Horror barring the way to the convicts . . .

So the friend said to him:

"Come, man of Purity, scourge of the adulterers!
A word, unblemished One!

"I see that you are good through fear,
And not because of your nature . . .
I see that you are stainless because you want to be respectable,

And because it is easier to succeed in the world if people think well of you . . .

"You may have fooled the world and you may have fooled yourself:
But Nature is never fooled . . .
She leaks through in her own mysterious way.
She plagues a liar until the whole spirit itches . . .
For what makes you so smug and dull and such a dead weight on your friends:
And why do you breathe invisible corruption about you,
And remind one of slime and dung and detestable things?
Why does the hearty sinner send joy upon me, and quicken my heart,
So that I throw up my hat and applaud the freshness of life,
While you, O Unspotted One, eat into my day like a canker of ennui?
You breed a hate of virtue and a loathing of goodness . . .

"Ha, it is the hidden hell breathing through you:
It is the smothered beast radiating his foulness through your flesh:
It is the adultery in the heart which is less honest and more evil than the adultery in the act . . .
(Did not the same truth-teller speak of the whited sepulchre?)

"Come, you are not only a sinner, but a coward as well:
For the sinner of courage goes honestly and commits his sin:
And so rids himself of this pus, and cleanses the air for us,
And makes us glad, even as a thunderstorm that purifies a muggy day . . .

"So, a word, friend (I was never so real a friend as now, flaying you alive!)
The things you damn in others are the things that are really you:
Go, know yourself: turn your eyes inward: walk humbly into your hell:
Wear every scarlet stripe of those blood-red flames:
And then wait the miracle . . .

"For behold! Sin? Not so: no, but the human . . .
Thus are we all . . .
Shall we say Nature is foul and corrupt?
Shall we say the receding road of a million million years down the past
Was all a mistake, though it is we that emerge from that road?
Shall we damn our Mother, whose nimble fingers are ages that tenderly shaped us?
Shall we curse the cyclone that whirled up from the sun and in fierce cycles begot Earth and her children,

And now sweeps through us, crying out to us to create?
Nay, under the crust of our minds lie the weltering universes
Jetting up power enough to fill the skies with new stars . . .

"But, lo, on the crust, and over the welter,
Sits a god: the creator: you:
And more than the hills and the seas give you granite and steam
The self within offers raw powers and materials . . .
Take this desire of women and shape of the passion a poem or a city,
Take this lusting to kill and conquer the heavens with wings,
Take these hungering beasts in your breast and beget civilizations!
What you call Hell, is merely unharnessed power!
And if you touch these red devils with love and hearty good will
Behold as they lift their eyes, the faces of gods . . .

"Smother not the storm of Life in the soul:
But open the way, and shape it, blowing from your hands and lips:
Be a god using the storm as your own wings . . .
The lifter of your spirit!

"Then, indeed, you will cease to condemn them who
have not the guidance to transform their powers,
But live as in nature,
Then, indeed, you will go sit with publicans and sin-
ners,
And understand and enjoy them."

ABIDE THE ADVENTURE

NEITHER from the woe,
Nor from the war,
Think ye to escape . . .
It helps nothing that ye shut your eyes, oh, cloistered cowards and gilded idlers!
For neither shall cushion nor buffet ease the sharp shock of life,
Neither shall delicate music in hushed hotels drown out the roar of the battling streets . . .
Neither shall wingéd wheels carry you away to the place of peace . . .
How can ye go from yourselves, deluded ones?

Make but a world of rest:
Swifter than striking lightning
The Aladdin of the soul builds in the heart
A world of unresting hell . . .
And, oh ye shunners of war, ye are gruelled in a war of the spirit,
In a battle of nerves and blood-vessels and the ghost-haunted brain,
And the death of delight . . .

Hence, whip ye to battle:
Live ye to the uttermost:
Abide the adventure.

TAKE PHYSIC, POMP!

I WAS as a sieve for the wind this morning:
I hurried to be out of it:
Zero weather, merciless and gray . . .

Yet there on the pave beside the park rail,
Leaning toward the brown frozen grass,
Stood one so thinly clad,
He bit on a wad of paper between his teeth to cover his lips and nose,
His jacket was stuffed with newspaper, his shoes with rags . . .
He was all puffy red and bleary and huddled . . .

At the same time he was throwing bits of stale bread to some sparrows . . .

Curious!
Was it the extremity of his suffering made him a brother of life?
Ran the pain so deep that he felt even for birds?

I think of Lear's cry: "Take physic, pomp!"

IF IT COMES TO THIS

BITTER, bitter,
A night that kills with a perishing wind,
The cold soaks the tight houses, fighting the fires . . .

The air about the street-lamps is blue with cold,
The moon's a disc of ice frozen to the sky,
The streets are whipped clean of people: the wanderer
blows into the nearest doorway . . .

Yet before the concert hall
The chauffeur sat two hours in the rich woman's limousine
While she fed her soul with delicious music indoors . . .
The policeman passing thought that he slept, and shook him . . .
He did not sleep: he was dead of the eating cold . . .

And what is our Art, and our skyscraping Commerce and Traffic,
And what our steam-heated Civilization,
And what this worry over our tiny Souls,

Yea, what this wealth pulled from the Earth by
machines and so great that we waste it,
If it all comes to this?

Benign Brotherhood, do we really want you?
Or are you an empty word to cover our feeble spirits?

THE WEAK

EVER the same—this love of the weak.
The wind was so bitter that the Italian mother and
child were blown back at the corner . . .
The little boy cried, whimpering against the world . . .
Quickly the mother took her shabby furs from her
neck
And wrapped them about her son . . .
Then they went on, both of them content.

We pity ourselves when we pity the frailties of others,
We see ourselves in the beggar or the murderer sen-
tenced to be killed;
And when we soothe and heal another we are merely
laying gentle hands upon our own dark trouble . . .

That which ye do for the least of these,
Ye do for me . . .
Who cannot say this, loving the weak?

THE HAG

THE old hag sat on the park bench, picking her teeth:
Her hat was askew over her stiffened bangs:
Her skirts were bunched together: her shoes broken.

What did Spring mean to her?
What meaning in the new grass blades and the cloudy blue of the skies?
How did the slow-rising love-hymn of the Earth sound in her ears?
What mate in the world for her?

I passed by, young and in power:
But I wished for a moment I could be inside her head,
And see what else the world means.

PRIESTS

PRIESTS are in bad odour,
And yet there shall be no lack of them . . .
The skies shall not lack a spokesman,
Nor the spirit of man a voice and a gesture . . .

Not garbed nor churched,
Yet, as of old, in loneliness and anguish,
They shall come eating and drinking among us,
With scourge, pity, and prayer.

WHERE BIDES BROTHERHOOD?

WHERE bides Brotherhood,
Where, but within?

Self is the world-container,
Pyramid of eternity whereof my body is infinitesimal
apex . . .
Whereof all bodies are the apices . . .
But Self is thyself just the same as myself.

So never shall charity avail me,
And never kind words nor the urging of excellent laws,
Nor warring for weighty politics, nor voting with the
oppressed . . .
Only the going to Self is a going to my brothers . . .
Only walking deep in to the heart of love is walking
out to the darkened cities of men . . .

What help to meet the stranger from the outside?
How pierce his mask?
No, I dive under him into the stream beneath,
Then rise through him, and dwell in his deep heart.

THE ROCK

THE soul is an abyss,
The crowd is a rock.

Give me then the dive into the bottomless pit,
Thence to draw power and the strength of spacious life . . .
But let me not drown in those waters where madness lies,
Let me not drown like Nietzsche, scorner of mobs . . .

No, risen again to the surface,
I will go set my feet upon the rock.

ACTION

THERE comes a moment when to believe is not
enough,
When to go on merely feeling and thinking is inex-
cusable . . .
There comes a moment when we must out and act.

For at the last
We must pass thought through matter, giving it flesh.
That is the act of creation, that only Life:
That is what the world means with its physical beauty,
And what our bodies mean, projected, solid . . .
Passion has become lips and arms, and the billowing
seas . . .

Many scholars have died of this malady,
Many dreamers have rotted in cloistered safety,
Much of greatness has passed, still-born . . .

BROTHERHOOD

IF you want to find your brothers,
Find yourself . . .
You are not a person; you are a race . . .

What we see of you is a ray of light emanating from
the hidden skies within you . . .
In those skies humanity dwells . . .
Enter them; find your brothers . . .

You shall find infinite love:
You shall be all you see:
Communion with the grass and the sea-waves shall be
no harder than with human beings . . .
St. Francis knew this: preaching to the birds.

Not alone in division of food and comfort,
Not alone in bare Justice (long needed, the unescapable duty of our age)
Not in these only shall Brotherhood come . . .

No, not until you go the ancient way;
Way of Buddha, Jesus and Isaiah,
The long long journey, farther than sun from earth,
(So near, such heavens away) to your own Soul,
Shall dawn benign Brotherhood.

TRANSFIGURATIONS

WE SPAT on the dirt and the flesh
Through two thousand years of soul-sickness . . .
And so the poor have been with us,
And the good people have been vile lies, holy and stinking . . .

Enough of this!
Glory is dirt converted, and magic is flesh transfigured . . .

Not to the heavens we pray,
And not to a white-bearded God, tottering and old:
From no far world does majesty descend.

But when we pray,
We pray to our own selves:
To no stars outward, but to one heart inward:
The dusty despicable Self on the top
To the sea-vast world-swelling Self underneath . . .
And in that Self what is not?

There yawn the seven Hells seen of Dante,
There rise the circling Paradises to the sun,

There in the brimstone of lust, and fire of greed, and
ice of stormy passion,
Purification goes on, and the making of all that is
high . . .

Go kneel then in the pit of your flesh, in the darkness
of the dirt:
There the wings grow and the desire for the sky,
And the fury creative . . .

Out of the noise of the world the musician shapes his
sun-bursts of music,
Out of the loathsome dirt the sculptor moulds his
shapes, shining, alive,
And out of the raw desire of man for woman arise
Wingéd love and the dream of brotherhood and cries
of the martyrs . . .

Look to the flesh: go wipe out poverty:
Then hell will be emptier.

THE MILLENNIUM

ASK for no mild millennium:
Our world shall never be nobler than its inhabitants:
Never be nobler than you and I, blind brother.

What is this world but our secret natures opened and stamped into cities?
The smoke of the mills is only the vapor of our soft-coal hearts:
The slums of the poor and the drab palaces of the rich are the filth of our spirits:
The curses of the world are but the unleashed beast in us roaming the streets.

Here and there is one shining among us:
He is not a conqueror of tools, but a conqueror of self:
He strides like a sun in the crowds, and people are glad of him:
He did not wait for a millennium to perfect him:
He did not see the need of sanitation and pure food to help him to a soul:
He wrestled with the antagonist in his own breast and emerged victorious.

Give us a hundred million such, and a greater world is upon us:
But give us only a perfect world, and it shall be a coat that misfits us.
Stagnation and sin shall be there as surely as they are deep in our hearts.

FUNERALS

ONE would think the dead were burying the living,
not the living the dead,
The way we hold funerals . . .
Bah! my heart sickens!

Please, when I die, know that I am very well able to
care for myself,
And that the journey is mine, not yours:
Then take the refuse I left behind me
And quickly and quietly burn it up.

AT FORTY

IT WAS you, the glowing youth that went forth
Conquering the world with laughter,
And radiantly running after visions.

Now forty years lie on you like a frost:
Disillusionment is in the very handshake you proffer me:
And a crust of habits and troubles has overlaid you.

You call death your friend, and think he is long in coming:
You have lost faith in life and in your own true self:
And the failure of your work enfeebles your ambition and effort.

See deeper:
The real you is that glowing youth:
Pierce back to him.

THE BLAME

YOU blame yourself:
You writhe with remorse because you make
trouble for your dear ones:
And the love you give them seems but the mother of
tears and sighs.

But are you to blame?
Or is it the human predicament?
You are unhappy yourself: who caused it?
Do you not know it is hard for people to live together?

The sun in summer by merely swimming through the
skies
Sends down a scorching heat:
Shall the sun therefore go weeping through the heavens,
Remorseful and miserable?
Is it the sun's fault that we cannot bear his rays?

CRIME

HA! YOU count it horrible that the murder was committed,
That the man was killed.

What ails you?
Is it the thought of what happened to the body,
Or the imagined terror of the victim?

And yet, much nearer home, and quite invisible,
With sharp knife of words, glances, and even kisses,
A slow still murder is proceeding;
And the victim has, not minutes, but years of torment.
Far more horrible than any murder of the body
Is this murder of the life.

Do you guess whom I mean?
Yes, it is you.

THE CHILDREN

IS THAT your reason? The children? Their future?

Tut! blow off the foam of sentimentality and piffle!
Look through the depths beneath.

Somehow your child had to come and take the risk of being yours:
The risk was real . . .

Perhaps you were poor, and his environment dirty and dark:
Or you were bad-tempered or lecherous:
Or you were the opposite of his nature and would oppose his growth.

Now, tell me: what is his future to be?
Built on a father who is a lie and evasion?
Or strong and true?

Is that last not a risk worth taking?
Is it not part of the risk of his being born your son?
Truly, sparing him pain may be the very way of spoiling his nature:

Give a child credit for being as human as you are:
Let him share the great fight:
He will thank you in the end.

TOO HUMAN

HOW many are strong enough to reject riches?
Not I, not I!

And who can flee from the poisoned breath of flattery?
And who can escape from the friends that shield his weakness?
And who can put away slothfulness and the lure of women?
Not I, not I!

We are too human, we little ones!
Praised be the hostile world
And the scourge of need.

Jottings

NEW-BORN

DEATH and birth dog us:
I died only a few days ago:
Now, new-born, I send up a cry of delight at creation:
The world and I are so unstudied fresh . . .

LISTEN

GO A little aside from the noise of the world:
Go near to yourself . . .
Listen . . .

Ah, music, pulse-beats of Life, whispers of Death!
They were there all the time like a brook that is under the ground.

THE SEA IS ITSELF

THE sea is itself: it does not fear to be calm or stormy,
gray or gold, loud or soft—
Why have I feared to be like the sea—myself?

THE FLAME

WHAT is the tiny flame of my match that gives itself
so freely that soon it is consumed and vanishes?

THE SEA WHISPERS

THE sea whispers to me of women because I am lonely
for the love of women.
Now I hear the luring whispers of girls in the rustling
surf—
Now bass of men's voices furious, urgent, and strong.

BREAST OF EARTH

BREAST of earth, with all these sea-worn stones,
Tumbled together, gray, purple and brown, red and
green and white,
What beauty within you . . .

SHH!

THE sea put a finger of foam on its lips of waves,
Saying, "Shh!" saying, "Hush!"

I that was vexed and unquiet,
Heard, and was soothed.

TWO FACES

I SAW the unwritten face of the child
Beside the mother's trouble-writ face.

MASTERS

I TAKE as my master, not you nor myself nor the past:
But Life.

Every chain I break is for the sake of the eternal irons:
I snap the links that bind me to you and you:
I crack away from the chaining appetites of myself:
And surrender to the manacles of the procreant Power of the world.

Then am I a careful instrument used ruthlessly:
Quickly may the tool break and be shattered:
The risk is enormous:
But better to be a brief tool in the hands of Power
Than be a weighty long-lived instrument rusting in your hands, my human masters.

TO THE PERILOUS OPEN

WE, THAT are the very waters of change,
Wearied, seek the unchanging:
We want a rock under our feet.

A rock of God, a rock of institutions,
A rock of indissoluble marriage:
The absolute.

And it does not matter if the rock has a nest of snakes upon it,
And is slimy and slippery, betraying our feet . . .
There will we stand, there will we suffer: our Rock!

But I—I will to my own, to the kin of my spirit:
I, the waters of change, will give myself to Life, that sea in flux,
To the vast variety, to the perilous open, to the stinging salt:
Strength must one have to swim: and I shall grow strong with the sea.

BEREFT

WHO can measure the agony of man?
There seem too many of us:
Too many millions: too great a multitude of needy beings:
Too myriad-hearted a need . . .
What sun, what rain shall feed this human grass of the Earth?

Alas! in the crowd I come and go, confused and wandering:
I cannot see a meaning in the tumult and disaster:
I cannot guess a triumphant purpose in this pinch of man-dust on this hidden planet . . .
As the street-crowds run from my bereavéd spirit,
So crowds of the stars rush past, heedless of our trouble . . .
Yet it goes on:
Yet we have clothes on our back and food for our mouth,
And a thousand creeds pronounce their rival revelations,
And stout-hearted we go forth to fight in the morning
And lay us down at night, spent, spent . . .

All day they carry out the dead from the city, and all day the cry of the new-born echoes behind the walls . . .
Youth is broken on the streets and the lovers part and the married hate and long for an ending:
Child against mother, son against father, the strong at the throats of the weak:
And every generation the annihilator of the generation that brought it to birth . . .

Havoc and disaster,
And a going down to graves and a last dissolution:
And the bleak winds of November blowing up from the seas,
And the Earth dismantled and dying, dying . . .

I that found thee in my soul and in the radiance of the sun,
Hide now alone, bereft: cut off:
A few pounds of human trouble:
A little wisp of darkness:
A fleck of shadow on immensity.

TASTING THE EARTH

IN A DARK hour, tasting the Earth.

As I lay on my couch in the muffled night, and the rain
lashed my window,
And my forsaken heart would give me no rest, no
pause and no peace,
Though I turned my face far from the wailing of my
bereavement . . .
Then I said: I will eat of this sorrow to its last shred,
I will take it unto me utterly,
I will see if I be not strong enough to contain it . . .
What do I fear? Discomfort?
How can it hurt me, this bitterness?

The miracle, then!
Turning toward it, and giving up to it,
I found it deeper than my own self . . .
O dark great mother-globe so close beneath me . . .
It was she with her inexhaustible grief,
Ages of blood-drenched jungles, and the smoking of
craters, and the roar of tempests,
And moan of the forsaken seas,

It was she with the hills beginning to walk in the shapes
of the dark-hearted animals,
It was she risen, dashing away tears and praying to
dumb skies, in the pomp-crumbling tragedy of
man . . .
It was she, container of all griefs, and the buried dust
of broken hearts,
Cry of the christs and the lovers and the child-stripped
mothers,
And ambition gone down to defeat, and the battle
overborne,
And the dreams that have no waking . . .

My heart became her ancient heart:
On the food of the strong I fed, on dark strange life
itself:
Wisdom-giving and sombre with the unremitting love
of ages . . .

There was dank soil in my mouth,
And bitter sea on my lips,
In a dark hour, tasting the Earth.

RENUNCIATION

HAVE we given up thy spell, Renunciation?
Do we dream that we can be born without first dying?
That joy comes with no pain?

Once the world heard thy lips crying: "Renounce! renounce!"
Oh, calm-eyed wingéd one that hovers near us . . .
But now they preach of the unalloyed pleasures of the faithful,
And of the gains that fly to the needy soul all effortless!

Yet do I know that desiring my dearest friend,
I did not have him till I went from him,
Lonely for his sake through a month of days . . .

Yet do I know how songs are written . . .
The singer moves away from faces,
He goes from blessed comfort to cold agony,
Putting away the man in him to be the poet . . .

Yet do I know of a mother (so of all mothers)
Who could not have the child biding in her womb

Till, shrieking, she had given him up,
And from her body the small new life was sundered . . .
Then in her arms she held him: he was hers . . .

WE DEAD

WHEN from the brooding home,
The silent immemorial love-house,
The belovéd body of the mother in her travail,
Naked, the little one comes and wails at the world's bleak weather,
We say that on Earth and to us a child has been born . . .
But now we move with unhalting pace toward the dark evening,
And toward the cold lengthening shadow,
And quick we avert our fearful eyes from the strange event,
The burial and the bourne . . .
That leaving home: the end . . . Death . . .

Are these then birth and death?
Does the cut of a cord bring life and dust to dust expunge it?
If so, what are we then, we dead?

For, in the cities,
And dark on the lonely farms, and waifs on the ocean,
As a harrying of wind, as an eddying of dust,

We dead, in our soft shining bodies that are combed
and are kissed,
Are ghosts fleeing from the inescapable hell of our-
selves . . .

We are even as beetles skating over the waters of our
own darkness,
Even as beetles, darting and restless,
But the depths dark and void . . .

We have found no peace, no peace: though our en-
gines are crafty:
What avail wings to the flier in the skies
While his dead soul like an anchor drags on the Earth?
And what avails lightning darting a man's voice, linking
the cities,
While in the booth he is the same varnished clod,
And his soul flies not after?
And what avails it that the body of man has waxed
mammoth
Limbed with the lightning and the steam,
While his spirit remains a torment and a trifle,
And gaining the world, profits nothing?

Self-murdered, self-slain, the dead cumber the Earth . . .
And how did they die?

A boy was born in the pouring radiance of creative
magic:
And with pulses of music he was born . . .

Of himself he might have been shaping a song-wingéd
poet . . .
But he was afraid . . .
He feared the gaunt garret of starvation and the lonely
years in his soul's desert,
And he feared to be a jest and a fool before his
friends . . .
Now he clerks, the slave . . .
And the magic is slimed with disastrous opiates of the
Night.

A girl was bathed with the lissome beauty of the seeker
of love,
The call of the animals one to another in the Spring,
The desire of the captive woman in her heart, as she
ran and leaped on the hills;
But the imprisoned beast's cry terrified her as she
looked out over the love-quiet of the modern
world . . .
Yet she desired to take this man-lure and release it
into loveliness,
Become a dancer, lulling with witchcraft of her young
body the fevered world . . .
But no, her mother spied here a wickedness . . .
Shamefully she submitted, making a smouldering in-
ferno of the hidden Nymph in her soul,
And so died.

A woman was made body and heart for the beautiful
love-life . . .

But of the mother-miracle,
How the cry of a troubled child whitens the red passions,
She did not know . . .
Fear of poverty corrupted her: she chose a fool that her heart hated,
And now through him no release for her native passions,
But only a spending of her loathsome fury on adornment and luxury . . .
Ah, dead glory! and the heart sick with betrayal!

There is no grace for the dead, save to be born again:
Engines shall not drag us from the grave,
Nor wine nor meat revive us.

For our thirst is a thirst no liquor can reach nor slake,
And our hunger a hunger by no bread filled . . .
The waters we crave bubble up from the springs of life,
And the bread we would break comes down from invisible hands.

We dead! awake!
Kiss the belovéd past goodby,
Go leave the love-house of the betrayéd self,
And through the dark of birth go and enter the soul's bleak weather . . .
And I, I will not stay dead, though the dead cling to me,
I will put away the kisses and the soft embraces and the walls that encompass me,

And out of this womb I will surely move to the world
of my spirit . . .
I will lose my life to find it, as of old,
Yea, I will turn from the life-lie I lived to the truth I
was wrought for,
And I will take the creator within, sower of the seed
of the race,
And make him a god, shaper of civilization . . .

Now on my soul's imperious surge,
Taking the risk, as of death, and in deepening twilight,
I ride on the darkening flood and go out on the waters
Till over the tide comes music, till over the tide the
breath
Of the song of my far-off soul is wafted and blown,
Murmuring commandments . . .

Storm and darkness! I am drowned in the torrent!
I am moving forth irrevocably from the sheltering
womb!
I am naked and little!
Oh, cold of the world, and lights blinding, and space
terrifying!
Now my cry goes up and the wailing of my helpless
soul:
Mother, my mother!

Lo, then, the mother eternal!

In my opening soul the footfall of her fleeting tread,
And the song of her voice piercing and sweet with love of me,
And the enwinding of her arms and adoring of her breath,
And the milk of her plenty!
Oh, Life, of which I am part; Life, from the depths of the heavens,
That ascended like a water-spring into David of Asia on the eastern hills in the night,
That came like a noose of golden shadow on Joan in the orchard,
That gathers all life: the binding of brothers into sheaves:
That of old, kneelers in the dust
Named, glorying: Allah, Jehovah, God.

II

WE LIVING

THE MAN SPEAKS

From "The Beloved"

YOU and I in the night, spied on by stars . . .
You and I in the belovéd night . . .
You and I within these walls.

A breath from the sea is kissing the housetops of the city,
Kissing the roofs,
And dying into silence.

Earth and stars are in a trance,
They dream of passion, but cannot break their sleep.
They pass into us, and we are their passion, we are their madness,
So shaped that we can kiss and clasp . . .
One kiss, then death, the miracle being spent.

Watchman, what of the night?
Sleep and birth! Toil and death!
Now the light of the topmost tower winks red and ceases:
Now the lonely car echoes afar off . . .
Helen looked over the wine-dark seas of Greece, and she was young.

But not younger than we, touching each other, while
dawn delays . . .

Dare we betray this moment?
Dare we die, missing this fire?
Whither goes massive Earth tonight, flying with the
stars down eternity?
We are alive: we are for each other.

THE WOMAN SPEAKS

From "The Beloved"

OH, MY being, opening into the dazzle of sunrise!
Where are you blowing me, trumpets?
What blast of music am I, striding the wind?

I took the hand of my belovéd, and I was satisfied.
I kissed his lips, and the stone of my heart became
a song.
I kissed his lips, and was born again.

Love, now I know thee!
I have looked into thine eyes, Splendor:
I have kissed thy lips, golden boy . . .

Bear me to the ends of the earth,
Drown me in oceans,
Crush me beneath granite mountains:
I give all, I render myself up,
O thou, that art the breath of life: the whisper on the
deeps.

BELOVED

LOVE:
To approach you with the touch the sculptor gives his clay,
Subdued, inspired:
To catch in the radiance of my heart the purity of yours,
White breathless fires:
To let the still sea of song in my spirit move toward its shore, your soul,
With dying music: (Oh, hear me, adored one!)

Love:
To watch as one watches the face of the beloved coming out of death,
Every wavering of your lashes:
To feel each fluctuation of your yearning and your desire,
And meet it with caresses:
To enfold you gently until your whole soul slides into mine,
Conquering me with submission: (Adored one, hear me!)

Love:
To meet the dawn together and the widening light,

Seas in our hearts sounding,
To take from a kiss the glory of a dawn in our spirits,
And the arousal to living:
To rise from each other's arms magnified and mighty,
Heroic and human: (Adored one, hear me!)

Such may our love be: such be our passion, beloved.

ANNIE

IN THE fragrance of her simple heart I still bathe myself:
For Annie was a girl of the people,
With eyes of the clearest brown,
And a voice low and sweet.

Her blushes were quick as her tears:
And the caress of her hand, and the "ah!" as she sighed,
Thinking she had offended,
Were as echoes of moonlit waters on a far shore . . .

Something breathed from her as deep of the womanly as the Earth itself:
I dreamt of hay in the barn, and slopes of daisies beside the road,
And the kitchen scoured and shining, and the hearth gleaming in the night:
Something so old and new, so common and magic:
For Annie was a girl of the people,
A darling of the Earth.

She said: "I am lonely, too . . .
I live in a room by myself and work in the day . . .

Three months back my mother died, leaving me
lonely . . ."

"Ah," she said, "your brown eyes now!" And she
laughed, and we kissed . . .
And over her face came a glow as her eyes met mine,
And her deep glance pierced me . . .

"Soon as you're gone," she said, "you'll be forgetting
me:
And you'll take to the next woman you ever meet,
And you'll kiss her like you kiss me . . .
But I'll not be forgetting you ever in my life:
And how we met, and came up the stoop, and kissed
behind the door . . ."

"So," she sighed, holding me close by the hand,
"Go now: what'll I think of myself letting you kiss me?
It's my fault, sure: I'd never be blaming you . . .
Goodnight," she sighed, and we kissed, and she
watched me go.

Out of the Earth spring natural simple flowers:
Out of the people come simple natural women:
Annie, one of the sweetest.

THE LOVE-HOUR

WHERE may she of the hall bedroom hold the love-hour?
In what sweet privacy find her soul before the face of the belovéd?
And the kiss that lifts her from the noise of the shop,
And the bitter carelessness of the streets?
Neither is there garden nor secret parlor for her:
And cruel winter has spoiled the shores of the sea;
The benches in the park are laden with melting snow,
And the bedroom forbidden . . .

But ah, the love of a woman! She will not be cheated!
Up the stoop she went to the vestibule of the house,
And beckoned to me to come to that darkness of doors:
Here in a crevice of the public city the love-hour was spent . . .

Outside rumbled the cars between drifts of the gas-lit snow,
And the footsteps fell of the wanderers in the night . . .
Within, the dark house slept . . .

But we, in our little cave, stood, and saw in the gleaming dark
Shine of each other's eyes, and the flutter of wisps of hair,
And our words were breathlessly sweet, and our kisses silent . . .

Where is there rose-garden,
Where is there balcony among the cedars and pines,
Where is there moonlit clearing in the dumb wilderness,
Enchanted as this doorway, dark in the glare of the city?

A WOMAN FOR THE ADVENTURE

I WANT a woman for the adventure:
And my demands are monstrous, never to be met . . .

For I want first the body that slopes like a wave of the sea toward my senses:
And whose desire is for me, my least kiss fetching the answering glow:
And whose face, pensive in the twilight, sends my mind back to the legend of women,
And whose coming and going is as the footfall of the wind on a summer's night,
And whose words drop between pauses of music gentle and piercing,
And who gives herself in the wish of children.

But that is not all: oh, not more than a fragment of what I demand:
I want her to be the mother of my hours of weakness:
Quick will be the intuition searching to my need and my cry:
Gentle the healing of those caressing hands, breath of that soothing voice:
Deep will be the love that makes me whole again.

And yet more I ask: insatiate man that I am:
I want the comrade free and supple-hearted as a man,
Who puts on her boots and her khaki and goes out with me on the holiday morning,
And away we tramp on a lark, young vagrants both:
And she will swim, and sleep on the ground, and climb up the mountains,
Yea, she will up, at a moment's notice, and be off to strange cities,
And take the peril and the joy of strange lands and strange people.
And she will be willing to live without me when she sends me off on some journey.

Yet demand worst of all: and paradox quaint:
As I stand father to the children of her body,
I want the woman who stands father to the children of my spirit:
Yea, she who comes to her fulfillment through my vision and my works:
She who impregnates my soul with seed of her spirit,
Until there grows the life that through mighty travail is born:
Our works: our child!

Ah, you will say: not a woman, but a goddess I demand:
Ah, you will tell me I am monstrous, and so will not find her:

Yet, out with the truth of it! Such are the cravings of men:
Such the woman I want for the adventure!

WHEN A WOMAN IS WANTED

WHEN a woman is wanted,
What is the printed page, that I can idle over it,
And what the street, that I can wander it through?

The kiss in imagination is but whiskey . . .
It makes the thirst rage . . .
The dream of caresses and whispering love is but a beckoner forth from the prison-cell . . .

I want, not an image, but flesh and blood,
Not words in a book, but words that come living from human lips,
Not an exquisite description, but a raw sight actual and near . . .
Not an aching armful of air, but a crowded armful of resisting and surrendering woman . . .
Lips that my own can be pressed against in strong kisses,
Hair to fall down on my shoulders and tease me with its odour of sun-warmed pine-needles,
Eyes that can light and dim, fluctuating to the words and glances I send her . . .
Oh, one here, now, close to me, mine, as I hers.

How can I conjure you up from the millions in this city?
Somewhere you sit, dreaming, and empty, and sad . . .

Oh, how many thousands like myself brood in their lonely rooms and wish?
Girls and youths parted by narrow walls?
And who shall go seeking and who shall be found tonight?

FOLK-HUNGER

FIERCE hunger has come upon me,
And neither meat nor wine can stay me . . .
I am starved for men and women.

I want to go where the crowd is thickest,
Where the spot-light man colors the graceful favorite
on the stage with green, then gold, then violet . . .
Where the audience roars at the jocose comedian and
the strong stout woman . . .
Where I will be accepted, not by the Earth, but by my
fellows.
Sinking back into rough good commonness, just a
laugher and idler myself,
Warming the hands and heart of my soul at the
blazing hearth of the people . . .

Tomorrow, business with the lordly Earth,
Sessions with my Self in aching privacy . . .
Tonight, crowds, lights, gayety,
The cockles of my heart roasted as crisp as nuts,
And my lung-bellows roaring in the jolly brotherhood
of the world.

ON THE WAY TO HELL

I AM so happy these days
That beyond a doubt I shall soon be booted out of heaven!

Long was the fall of Satan
And the landing dull and unpleasant.

Yet:
I lie and laugh at life:
I cannot get out of bed, for very delight:
And I say: Though you wait for me, Hell,
I shall laugh all the way to your gates.

THE BAKERY WAITRESS

WHAT face lifts, so perfect in profile?
Who speaks to the young men at the table?
Is it Minerva slipped from her marble?

But what do the young men see?
One calls: "Hey! kid! butter-cakes and coffee!"

Curious, how very blind these eaters can be!

IN TALK WITH A PROSTITUTE

I AM no sorrier for you than I am for myself:
We are both human beings . . .
Alas! both of us have come through the gates of the dark
And thither return . . .
Why should we pity each other here in the night?

THE CUP OF DEW

LATE, and lonely, and faint for sleep,
I yet will pause and have silence,
That the thirsty one, my soul,
May open to the night
And drink the dew . . .

I know that the day was wasted, many-tongued.
In noise and dust I stifled:
Over me passed a wind of words, and the world reeled.

But now I am alone . . .
Now space, and silence, and my body and I
Bathed in belovéd night . . .

Dew of the stars and of the ether and earth,
Dew of my soul,
Fall into the cup of my beseeching hands,
That I may put thee to my lips
And drink the waters of great healing.

THE LONELY CHILD

DO YOU think, my boy, that when I put my arms
around you,
To still your fears,
That it is I that conquer the dark and the lonely night?

My arms seem to wrap love about you,
As your little heart fluttering at my breast
Throbs love through me . . .

But, dear one, it is not your father:
Other arms are about you, drawing you near,
And drawing the Earth near, and the Night near,
And your father near . . .

Some day you shall lie alone at nights,
As now your father lies:
And in those arms, as a leaf fallen on a tranquil stream,
Drift into dreams and healing sleep.

NOT OVERLOOKED

THOUGH I am little as all little things,
Though the stars that pass over my tininess are as the sands of the sea,
Though the garment of the night was made for a sky-giant and does not fit me,
Though even in a city of men I am as nothing,
Yet at times the gift of life is almost more than I can bear . . .
I laugh with joyousness: the morning is a blithe holiday:
And in the overrunning of my hardy bliss praise rises for the very breath I breathe.

How soaked the universe is with life:
Not a cranny but is drenched:
Ah, not even I was overlooked!

THE NEW BABE

THE BABE is the beautifully cunning dust that desires and breathes,
And through the soft pink of his body sing limpid sweet tides of life,
And at the light he is staring with wide blue eyes, unquestioning.

Oh, unawakened wonder! unopened blossom!
There I leaned, even so in my marvelous flesh,
But I and this body of mine were also as a pellet of dust
Dropped into gulfs of bathing light;
I, flower, drenched in the sunlight of the spirit,
In the spacious morning of the soul . . .

Divine is the unfolding and wonderful the opening petals
Of the babe in the storm and sun of the nourishing years.

HAD I THE WINGS

AH, HAD I the wings now,
Wings of the mounting condor to clear the clouds,
Clear the heavy clouds and soar to the day-dying sun,
To the sun, beyond these streets,
To the sun, beyond this lash of the winter rains . . .

But the day lags, binding me:
The day lags and my pent-up heart beats at its bars,
At its prison-bars beats, captive and dark.
Ah, had I the fire now, had I the joy now, had I the wings now
To clear the clouds of my rain-swept soul,
And soar in the heavens, sun-bathed.

THE BODY

BODY, whence come mind and soul?
"Ah," said the Body, "from me:
I am a tree, and mind and soul are the fruit . . .
Ages of fecund weather and nourishing dark experience,
And the strong sun of love and hate,
And rain of gray adversity,
Have begotten at last, you, loved wonder immortal!"

If this be so, my body,
I shall despise you no longer: but revere you and watch
over you:
Flood-gate of the race: and shores of my sea of spirit.

THE SUN-CHILDREN

FAR from the sun over the ages and the spaces of the sky,
We children have come . . .
Far from the sun by strange spirals, and long trances and struggles,
When we lay a seed in the mud of a steaming Earth,
When we swam in the waters of hushed creation,
When we crawled out and dwelt on the land, in the grasses and thickets,
When we swung from the trees of the jungle,
When at last we arose and stepped forth on the immense pilgrimage of man . . .
None may count even by millions the ages
Since far from the sun
And over the spaces and whirled in the skies,
We children have come.

Whence, our yearning back,
Our yearning for the sun that at dusk sinks into the womb of the waters,
And at morn is born from the bath of the eastern sea . . .

Our yearning for the peace and stillness of the sky
before the Earth was conceived,
Our yearning for the mother in the heavens and we but
a flake of her living fires.

SUN, WITH A MILLION EYES

SUN, with a million eyes: spyer of every window toward the east.
Sun, that scorches our faces.
Sun: light and fire . . .

The flame you jet begets life:
All has risen from sun-fire . . .

I too was sun-fire . . .

The sun is in me: I jet him forth into a new generation: into speech, love, labor.

The sun rises and sets, and then arises again.
I rise and set, and my child rises again.

Thy fires in a woman and in a man draw one to the other:
In thy radiance we behold each other,
Or when the moon snatches handfuls of thy glory across the night
And spills thy stolen beams upon the city,
There do we see but wanly one another.

ONE FLESH

IF MARRIAGE is to be one flesh, this twain made one,
Then I am married to the multitudinous world:
I have passed through the hills and the sea, and they through me:
Star-light and sun-light have drenched me, nestling under my skin:
Yea, I have eaten of the sun when I have eaten of the fruits of the field:
And I have drunk deep of the ocean . . .

All parts of my body have been elsewhere:
In other people: or in the grasses: or in the cow and tiger:
Continually the stars rain their rays into the meadows whereof I taste:
I am a meeting place for the tides of the waters of the world . . .

No wonder then I feel so at home:
That love goes from me to all creation:
I am only loving myself.

AT HOME

THE world is wild,
And it is a stormy world—how the stars burn!
How the sea rages!

Every atom is fighting for itself: in tempest and fire!
Tameless and wild!

But I too am wild: real child of this gypsy Mother . . .
And so at home, at home in the blast of the embattled hours . . .

I COULD WRITE THE PSALMS AGAIN

I COULD write the psalms again,
I could raise on high a voice of thanksgiving,
I could pace the eastern hills and bid the gates lift,
Bid the gates lift that usher the dawn of the spirit . . .
For my joy is the joy unbidden, welling from the heart,
The joy of the Life that springs of itself from the inmost recesses
When in still loneliness self meets with self.

PRAISE

WHAT song shall I sing to the heavens?
My heart is bounding with music:
I want to pour out my praise to the everlasting heights:
For the gift of life is apparent: as with wings I am lifted:
And the love of my heart goes forth to the ends of the Earth,
And I gather the folk in my arms, and for marvel of life
Want to chant to the heavens praise for the gift and the glory.

DANCERS

I HAVE a notion tonight, that the Earth and I, locked
in each other's arms,
Are dancing madly through the skies
Overcome with the sublimity of life,
While those whirling dervishes, the speedy suns,
Pause to behold us . . .

WASHINGTON SQUARE

STARLESS and still . . .
Who stopped this heart?
Who bound this city in a trance?

With open eyes the sleeping houses stare at the Park:
And among nude boughs the slumbering hanging moons are gazing:
And somnambulant drops of melting snow glide from the roofs and patter on the pave . . .
I in a dream draw the echoes of my footfall silvery sharp . . .

Sleep-walking city!
Who are the wide-eyed prowlers in the night?
What nightmare-ridden cars move through their own far thunder?
What living death of the wind rises, crackling the drowsy twigs?

In the enchantment of the ebb of life,
In the miracle of millions stretched in their rooms unconscious and breathing,
In the sleep of the broadcast people,

In the multitude of dreams rising from the houses,
I pause, frozen in a spell.

We sleep in the eternal arms of night:
We give ourselves, in the heart of peril,
To sheer unconsciousness:
Silently sliding through space, the huge globe turns.

I cannot go:
I dream that behind a window one wakes, a woman:
She is thinking of me.

SKY-LOVER

SKY-LOVER!
Embracer of the hiving stars!
The swarms of golden bees!
I feel the strength of thine ancient arms
And the power of thy going forth through endless night.

In the gross darkness thou hast spun a widening spiral of light,
Moons, stars and glowing suns:
But through these thou goest forth into the unadventured abysses,
Chaos unconquered,
We going with thee.

THE FLOCKS

ON A DOWNY feather of the dove, Earth, I lie:
The bird is flying down eternity.

Far out, and far under and over, the flocks of stars are
flying as in the autumn winds . . .
Whither are they winging? to what nests in what
radiant South?
And what echoes of their songs come to me,
And who is the gentle master of the homing birds?

THE TREE

HE SANG as if the heavens held only two things:
God and himself.

Was his voice heard as the roving Spirit leaned toward
the Tree of the Skies
And parted the leaves of the stars,
And peered through at the tiny green blossom, the
Earth,
And on Earth, the little singer, standing and praising
the Lord?

Yet here I am: the petal of earth swaying in an ocean
of far star-leaves:
Yet here I am, living, aware, and singing with loud full
voice.

Jottings

BOOKS

ONLY on the days when my life has ebbed
Do I feel the need of books to renew me . . .
But on the days when I am quick and pouring with life,
I turn to the book of the world at whatever page I happen to open it,
And read what never yet was told in ink.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

When I get there, *once I told myself,*
The fight will be over.

But when I got there, to my amazement,
The fight was not over . . .
And I see now it will never be over, even in death.

EXILE

You cannot exile me:
Wherever you send me, my dear old self goes along,
Carrying on his back the bag in which all the ages since
creation have thrown their winnings,
So that he staggers under riches . . .
How then can you exile me?

THE EDGE OF THE POSSIBLE

Vast is the city, concealing fires behind its walls, its
streets and its faces:
So for the adventure I choose the spacious night,
And go forth marvelling at what may happen:
Tripping along, breathless, on the edge of the possible.

THE BAFFLED ONE

NOT until you find a meaning in yourself, will you find a meaning in the world.
That is what ails you . . .
Your inner confusion you perceive all about you,
Once you get purpose into your life, and you will see it in all life.

RENEWAL

I RENEWED some forgotten friendships:
My old friend, the sky, and my comrade, the open air:
My dear cronies, the hills, and my lover, the sea:
I went out and we had an afternoon of it together.

They gave me tokens:
You may taste the sea on my cheeks, and the fragrance of the hills is in my hair:
And the tan on my face is a memento of the friendly sky.

THE ADORED ONE

I

(To Her of the Many Films)

YOUR smile is very sweet: yet it baffles me:
Your brown eyes are large and clear: yet the woman who peers through them is mysterious.

Though your talk flows in melody, winged with thought,
Though you seem so young, yet so quaintly wise,
You are deep, you are subtle, girl-faced woman!

Dove and serpent, is it?
Much am I baffled!

THE ADORED ONE

II

BE WHAT you are: all women in one:
Be the coarse fool, and the mean and petty complainer!
Be the slave, be the courtesan!
Be the haughty ruler of hearts, and the cruel strong empress!

Be also sweet, gentle, gracious:
The lovely child, and the wistful seeker after affection:
The calm woman, deep in brooding wisdom:
The healthy comrade, free and fleet-footed:
The watchful mother, with wings spread out for the loved one!

All that you hide mars what you reveal:
Be what you are, sure, various, strong:
Baffle us no longer: you are only baffling yourself.

THE ADORED ONE

III

YOU are proud and strong, lion-hearted girl:
But do you know what love is?

You are quick with the colors of beauty, star-gleaming girl:
But do you know what passion is?

Oh, the skies of Spring are here:
Where is a mate for the moon-warm darkness?
Crickets shall shrill in the grass as you walk alone.

What is the beauty of the lilies when no sun floods them?
They die, adorable one, they die in the grasses!
Do not turn away from the splendid shining of love:
But take your pride and your strength and with your two hands cast them in the dust:
Give up to love, as in death, to be born again:
You will come back radiant, you will come back bearing the sunrise,
Filling the light of the world with the light of your eyes.

THE ADORED ONE

IV

YOU play the queen:
But I remember a simple girl singing in the dairy:
Men were tamed by her sweetness.

You crown your hair with paste:
Have you forgotten the radiance of your undrugged eyes,
And the quickness of your smile?

I only say: Be yourself . . .
What in your play has reached down into the crater of your human heart,
Or walked the sun-clear peaks of your spirit?
Be demon: be angel: oh, be woman!
Queenship is but a garment hiding your glory:
Crowns but muffle the night-dream of your hair.

THE ADORED ONE

V

HAVE you kissed that kiss that draws open the door of life,
Loosening the floods, till your body sings with strong joy?

Do you know the tremor of the spirit that rises on a glance and a touch
And braids the stars in your hair?

Do you come shining to work in the gray morning
Because your lips are dewy with the imprint of a kiss?

Oh, glowing one, you walk in emptiness:
You distrust and despise yourself and the world of men:
In your triumph you taste defeat: and in your glory vanity:
Go and know love, the giver of victories.

THE ADORED ONE

VI

WHOSE adored one is this? For her beauty walks
on light to the ends of the Earth:
The Australian and Spaniard must sigh at a glance
of her face.

Many bring gifts to you, kneeling in the dust before
your loveliness:
Must I come, too?
Ah, no! ah, no!

I will stand before you: my eyes a little higher than
your eyes:
I will demand tribute of you,
Even the tribute I bring:
Yourself for myself: equal and free.

If you want worshippers, take these secret thirsters
after your beauty . . .
The honey they bring is bitter . . .
But if you want love, you can only get what you give:
You too must adore the belovéd, and kneel down your-
self when he kneels.

FRIENDS

NOW the day dies, and the workers trudge homeward:
They pass my window:
I see a few lights twinkling in the tall buildings, as if the evening star were reflected . . .
What hands are emptying the glowing urn of peace on the dark-wayed city?

My friend and I sat smoking in the little room:
Lightly we took the ball of the Earth and tossed it in talk to one another:
Unwitting the generation about us was held up to our probing:
Our hearts and minds were glowing urns of unthinkable riches which we poured for each other.

Is the evening so calm and tender because it has let go its full floods, giving love in its radiance?
As the evening were my friend and I:
We parted sure of each other: peace was upon us and serene love.

AS TO BEING MADE A FOOL OF

THAT bothered you, didn't it?
That prevented you from entering into strange
adventures,
Especially with women . . .

After all, however, it is not so bad:
If that be the price of experience
Then I must pay it:
For to be laughed at, and to play the fool
Is cheap, by all odds, in exchange for the gift of life.

THE WRITER OF MANY BOOKS

THE WRITER of many books was weary:
"Enough of ink!" said he, "Enough of words!
Would I were a builder of bridges or a breaker of stones . . .
Then at least something real were done . . ."

Out on a lonely farm in Montana, at the close of day,
The woman brooding toward insanity,
Lit a lamp, and looked in his book: and the tears came:
And the ice-pack round her heart melted down in a torrent . . .
Blessed release!

Far in Texas a tubercular boy was plotting a marriage,
But he read the tale, and his heart broke in his breast . . .
"I shall not send my blight on the unborn babe,"
So he wrote the author,
"No: I am off to Arizona tomorrow."

In a New York hall room a girl was dreaming of suicide,
She read his words, and as to a call of trumpets her soul rose and went forth . . .

A seed so small that the eye misses it
Starts in the womb the growth of a human child . . .
Ye that scatter the seed of words, scorn not the sowing,
Nor the Master that sent ye out in the barren fields.

THE MIGHTY HOUR

THESE ARE the days of immense and solitary strength:
When to be alone is no hardship
And to go forth among men is a satisfying joy . . .

For I have found myself:
I have ceased to be ashamed of the things I cannot do
And have become proud of the things I can do:
I have accepted simple living and endless labor:
I have accepted peril and risk all around me,
And I have become patient with the world and with my own faltering.

I live with this moment, and suck out its particular essence,
Whether it be the bakery lunchroom and the shopgirls about me,
Whether it be some poor dull person stuffed with rich eating,
Whether it be stars over the snow and the sharp winds of winter,
Or whether it be my narrow room, and unbusied loneliness . . .

So living, I give myself to the purpose of the Earth . . .
I let the Mother put forth through me as she puts forth through the least bud on her breast,
I open the way for the rise of that sap and shape it for men and women . . .
And so I am what I was born for: and peace comes in so being:
And strength . . .
For so Earth herself is for me, and even the stars in their courses . . .

Is this egotism?
Shall tomorrow break me in the dust till my cry goes up to the heavens?
Shall a bitter cup come to my lips after this splendor?
Even so . . .
I yet shall know what is possible in the mighty hour,
I yet shall know that a gaint sleeps in my heart,
And that after the despoiled days have gone over
Again I shall be myself and live in that victory.

III

WE UNBORN

THE MOTHER

WHAT DOES the woman sing to the love-seed under her heart?

"Oh, my beloved, unborn,
Oh, lips in the darkness that yet shall be kissing my breast:
I send my life-blood into you,
And great love upon you:
Hushed in the pool of the dark you blossom in me!

"Beloved! I make this charge upon you:
When out of my littleness you come to the sudden vastness,
And faces are about you, and cities, and the winds of the deep:
Fear nothing, baby:
My arms are there: my breasts: your mother meets you!"

Thus sings the woman: this is the song of all women:
So sang a woman to me.

Tides of the darkness! Cave of the midnight!
Am I still seed?
What life-blood flows through the Earth to me:
What great love is upon me:
Who sings? . . . What Mother?

DEATH

THIS starry world, and I in it . . .
How can I get out of it?

I go to sleep, but when I wake I am still here . . .
All night my blood-drops circled through my body as the stars circle through the body of the world . . .
All night the flame of life burned in my breast and brain as the stars burn in the breast and brain of the world . . .

And what is Death?
It is a swing-door. I push through, coming out on the other side . . .
But the other side is the world, just as this side is the world . . .
There is no escape . . .

So I had best do my work now, lest I shall have to do it later . . .
I had best be myself now, lest later I shall have to battle with the crusts upon myself,
Lest later I shall have to begin again at the beginning, unlearning all my faults . . .

This was as true a hundred million years ago,
This will be as true a hundred million years from now,
As it is now, at this moment.

LOOKING DOWN ON EARTH

LOOKING down on Earth,
As from some distant heaven,
And seeing body after body drop and the life fly from it,
All day long and all night a host of the dead arising:
It seemed indeed a curious life, that life:
It seemed indeed a curious end, that death . . .

Then, here on Earth,
I sitting at this desk in this small room,
So thrillingly alive,
Yet soon to meet that fine decisive moment,
Pause in strange awe to think that what these others,
These hosts of dead, have passed through,
I too shall soon experience, down to the last gray detail:
Darkness, with secret gleams of a rising twilight beyond . . .

Not only these others (ah, that is strange enough!)
But I myself: all that I am,
To pass through the black process,
Turning away in agony from the sweetness of the sun and the crowds,
Renouncing all, with bitter dread and loathing:

Even as the babe in the womb, could it be conscious,
Would pass into the mystery of the world . . .

Ah, world, art then a womb?
Are we, the living, but the unborn children,
And is death birth?

THE RUNNER IN THE SKIES

WHO is the runner in the skies,
With her blowing scarf of stars,
And our Earth and sun hovering like bees about her blossoming heart?
Her feet are on the winds, where space is deep,
Her eyes are nebulous and veiled,
She hurries through the night to a far lover.

IN THE THEATER

LAST NIGHT in the theater
The fleet-footed dancers bowed in the spotlight:
Then they clasped, and invisible hands shaped them
like waters that never spilled:
And at once through me rose the mists of creation:
And I saw that chaos, the illimitable nebula of the
universe
Had jetted forth this pair: the eternal pair:
Sex: the dancers: the light-footed trippers on the Earth.

THE SURVEYOR

A FANCY teases my brain:
From the North Star the Surveyor drops his plumb-line,
It unravels down to the Earth, and beyond the Earth through the spacious gulfs beneath . . .
He measures the heights and depths of the heavens:
Who shall measure the width?

A HANDFUL OF DUST

I STOOPED to the silent Earth and lifted a handful of her dust . . .
Was it a handful of humanity I held?
Was it the crumbled and blown beauty of a woman or a babe?
For over the hills of Earth blows the dust of the withered generations:
And not a water-drop in the sea but was once a blood-drop or a tear:
And not an atom of sap in leaf or bud but was once the love-sap in a human being:
And not a lump of soil but was once the rosy curve of lip or breast or cheek . . .

Handful of dust, you stagger me . . .
I did not dream the world was so full of the dead:
And the air I breathe so rich with the bewildering past:
Kiss of what girls is on the wind?
Whisper of what lips is in the cup of my hand?
Cry of what deaths is in the break of the wave tossed by the sea?
I am enfolded in an air of rushing wings:
I am engulfed in clouds of love-lives gone . . .

Who leans yonder? Helen of Greece?
Who walks with me? Isolde?
The trees are shaking down the blossoms from Juliet's breast:
And the bee drinks honey from the lips of David . . .

Come, girl, my comrade:
Stand close, sun-tanned one, with your bright eyes lifted:
Behold this dust . . .
This is you: this of the Earth under our feet is you:
Raised by what miracle? shaped by what magic?
Breathed into by what god?

And a hundred years hence, one like myself may come,
And stoop, and take a handful of the yielding Earth,
And never dream that in his palm
Lies she that laughed and ran and lived beside this sea
On an afternoon a hundred years before . . .

Listen to the dust in this hand:
Who is trying to speak to us?

ASSURANCE

YEA, THERE are as many stars under the Earth as
over the Earth . . .
Plenty of room to roll around in has our planet . . .
And I, at the edge of the porch,
Hearing the crickets shrill in the star-thick armies of
grass,
And beholding over the spread of Earth the spread of
the heavens . . .
Drink this deep moment in my pilgrimage,
With a sense of how forever I have been alive,
With a conviction that I shall go on, ever safe, ever
growing,
The stars to be included in my travels,
And the future sure before me.

THE RISEN ONES

BEGINNING millenniums back
We were given of the cup of the Earth to drink:
A cup of the blood of torment and love:
A cup set to our emerging and vanishing lips again and
again through a million years:
And we have waxed on agony: seed has become man.

But behold! now from the rivers of blood the prophets
of peace lift up,
Out of the pain rises a running and wingéd joy,
And out of the lamentation springs a laughter!

THE DREAMER IN ME

THE DREAMER in me keeps on dreaming though
my lips are babbling and my eyes are watchful . . .
I may be in the railroad terminal speaking to a friend.
The dreamer is on a warm moist hill under the cloud-
soft skies,
He feels the Earth moving and smells the flowers down
to their roots,
He pierces the blue heavens with his wings.
Then I look round and think, how strange:
Stone walls: crowds: my friend and I . . .
Yet all of us seen by the dreamer as a little blur in the
skies,
As a patter in immensity . . .
Where are we? where is Earth? where are the skies?
The dreamer shivers and laughs:
It is so miraculous, visionary and grotesque,
Such nonsense, this reality . . .
Yet my friend and I go on talking as if there were
nothing strange in it at all.

WE UNBORN

I

I AWAKE:
Midnight, star-shouldered, is leaning over me.

I must to my desk, and light the lamp, and stare at the
flesh of my hands and legs:
Marveling to breathe and be alive.

I open the window: I lean out in the dark.

Stars! shall you answer my cry tonight?
Earth! shall you turn to the call of your son?
Where is the answerer? Where are the lips of the
midnight?
Oh, world, my belovéd, whisper to me!

Surely my love for you has been welcome in the dark-
ness of the night:
Surely, Mother, the asking child shall be taught:
Though I am little in the flesh, am I not large in the
love of my heart?

II

I sit at my desk:
I take the eye of Science and spy out the endless ether
floating with worlds,
But of all those stars, those numberless millions beneath
and above,
Only the little hasty Earth under my feet.

Millions of the sprawling bodies of men clothe like
a sea the slopes of this planet,
But from all that naked flesh lying on the globe,
Here do I rise, not one of them: but I,
Myself . . .

III

I take the wings of thought,
Up from the Earth I soar, I scale the skies quicker than
light,
And the planet whirls to a moon beneath my feet,
And drops through the gulfs, a stone,
And dwindles to a star . . .
Still spreads the Milky Way ages above the reach of
my fingers,
And all the sides of the amphitheatre of Eternity hold
tiers on tiers of the far stars,
And the monstrous abyss is scattered with a sowing
of stars,

And looping its twinkling sun, the grain of the Earth
is shining . . .
But there is the body I left: sitting in the narrow room:
Writing at the desk:
It pauses: the face lifts: the eyes stare in the lamp-
light:
It questions . . . it questions!

I drop:
I am back in my room: I am at this desk:
Tut! skies? A picture hanging on the immense walls
of my mind:
The Earth is a curious nugget in the palm of my hand:
I am the sustaining and enfolding ether of the universe!

IV

I gaze at the ash of my cigar:
I become smaller than a pin-point: I climb inside the
ash:
Lo, a world immense and miraculous as the star-sown
universe!
I am standing in the spinning of atom-worlds,
I am pausing in the rising and setting of innumerable
suns,
I am lost in the fleeing of dead gray moons in the
dark . . .

I laugh: I fleck off the ash: it scatters:
And lo, I am still here, face to face with Self.

V

Ah, not that one thing is more miraculous than another,
But that somehow, struck from this mass and motion, not you nor the sun,
But I, I am here, in the center and thick of it:
This torch of a body with a brain shedding invisible light:
This Self, this secret cave I may retire to:
This paradox of outer appearance and inner perception:
This net that catches stars and people as if they were fish in the infinite sea:
This strainer wherethrough all tides of life pass, leaving deposits:
This tool working on the world: this flame burning into the beings of others:
This lover and hater casting light and shadow:
This creature: this creator:
This dwarf: this god:
This is the dumb-mouthed miracle my questions are shattered on!

VI

With all the heavens to choose from:
I that may have dropped once through the Milky Way,
Sky to sky falling,
How did I ever pick, not only the Earth,
Poor little brown ball, ever half-dark and half-wintry,

But that infinitesimal pair, that woman and man,
In the quaint hill-house at the head of the rambling street,
And take on—I that had measured the heavens—
This form that now is bowed at this desk, writing this song of questionings?

VII

The room swims out on space:
And I see that the finger of greatness touches my forehead:
And that size is nothing: experience is all.

For the kiss of my belovéd shrinks night to the rift of her lips,
And the death of my child darkens sun and moon in the firmament,
And my heart's song turns to an echo the large music of the spheres,
And my spirit's dream makes the heavens the shadow of my gliding feet.

VIII

I am as a wave fleeing before the flood of the ages:
The rush of the ocean-river pushes me on: it lifts creatively through me:
It yet shall sweep me out into the night.

Oh, Ocean, eddying with spindrift of stars and moons,
Oh, Mother-Ocean, how did you beget me?

And now the voice of the Ocean rolls into song in the channels of my heart:

IX

"I am the Mother:
I am the Ocean shaped of the waters of life:
My body is the spiraling torrents of Life across Eternity:
Out of the mouth of darkness I came pouring,
And down through night I descended, a child of waters,
A singing girl whose body grew hollow with the drifts of the suns . . .
For the nebula of my childishness was shot with dreams,
And I eddied toward the light that opens in your mind,
And I shaped toward the love that lies in your heart,
And I groped toward division into millions of gods,
The one made many . . .

"In a fury I have grown: ages but the crusts I have broken through:
Skies but the hollowness in the depths of my waters wherethrough I have sent my strength.
Suns but pods I have burst, scattering seeds of planets:
Earth but a bud of mist that opened before my yearning into hills:
And the hills, mating with my love, opened out into seeds,

And the seeds unfolded into animals,
And the vague-brained animals blossomed into man:
And still I grow: through you, I grow:
You in your little room somewhere suspended in the sky-egg of the stars:
That egg, the womb of your Mother!

"Son: my belovéd!
I am the Mother:
And though your body is hidden within me, I lift through you, you lift through me:
For I am the Ocean of life dividing into millions of channels:
You are one of the channels:
Together we innumerable waters pour through the heavens,
And there shall be many minglings until we grow into gods:
Growing forever through torment, travail and love:
Reaching toward the deaths that are births:
And you are that part of me that is creative as I:
Your will is on the reins of the stars even as mine is upon them:
Created, you have become a creator.

"Son: my belovéd!
Love death, the releaser:
Give yourself grown to the outward-opening gates:

Pass from the sun-woven littleness of the heavens
To the spaces of my arms:
Be born! be born! Many and many await you!"

X

Star-shouldered midnight! Room solid about me!
Flesh of my hand holding the pausing pen!
How here, cooped in, shall I realize the vision?

Lo, I will bag the stars, clapping the far millions of them in:
This scoop is the little womb of the Mother.

I will recede in phantasy a million years back
And stand in the sun-fire from which I sprang,
And swim the dark river of my life up the ages:
That river is the flowing blood of the Mother.

I will take a string and hold one end of it on the Earth
And one end touching the seven high Pleiades,
And I will describe a circle around the Earth:
This huge sphere of skies is but an egg in the body of the Mother.

XI

Mother:
Oh, thou reaching me through thy body with life-blood and love:

So deep within thee I bide: so thoroughly thou growest
through me:
So thoroughly I grow through thee:
That though the slant of infinity finds me as a mote of
flesh on the mote of a world,
The heavens are but feeders of my growth and the
Earth is my supper before the night of death:
The ages of thine agony and mine are the pains of my
growing:
They that love me and they that hate me are thy hands
shaping me:
And the streets are the running track of my soul.

Yea, these people are thyself and myself, Mother:
Through a million years we have been poured through
each other:
Through gate after gate of the human Mothers I have
come
Up the alley of the ages: often a mother myself . . .
Oh, generations, we have passed through each other!
Oh, houses of the flesh, we have dwelt in each other,
heart within heart!
Oh, people, it is for this I am drawn to you with such
unsearchable love!
This is the mass of blended life the Mother is growing
through.

XII

Mother, may I not well sing the amazing song of life?

Oh, may I not well lift the song of my adoration?
This gift is too great for the heart of me so tiny and throbbing:
Bear me on thy tides and pour through me into great and unwithheld creations and love:
Let my lips in the darkness bear witness to thee:
Let my works be thy works through the toil of my hands:
Let me go forth in the day dawning, dropping the stars of thy heavens on the darkened streets:
I am thy son, and I would have thee take joy in me:
I am thy unborn, Mother, moving toward the morn of my nativity.

INDEX OF FIRST LINES

	PAGE
A fancy teases my brain	147
Ah, had I the wings now	105
Ask for no mild millennium	53
Beginning millenniums back	151
Be what you are: all women in one	125
Bitter, bitter	42
Body, whence come mind and soul	106
Breast of Earth, with all these sea-worn stones	64
Civilization!	9
Death and birth dog us	62
Do you think, my boy, that when I put my arms about you.	102
Ever the same—this love of the weak	44
Far from the sun over the ages and spaces of the sky	107
Fierce hunger has come upon me	97
Go a little aside from the noise of the world	62
Have we given up thy spell, Renunciation?	72
Have you kissed that kiss that draws open the doors of life?	128
Ha! you count it horrible that the murder was committed.	58
Here is strength, here	31
He sang as if the heavens held only two things: God and himself	119
How many are strong enough to reject riches?	61
I am no sorrier for you than I am for myself	100
I am so happy these days	98
I awake	153
I could write the psalms again	112
If marriage is to be one flesh, this twain made one	110
If you want to find your brothers	50

Index of First Lines

PAGE

I have a notion to-night that the Earth and I, locked in each other's arms 114
I have heard of a great love 19
In a dark hour, tasting the Earth 70
In the fragrance of her simple heart I still bathe myself .. 88
I renewed some forgotten friendships 123
I saw the unwritten face of the child 65
Is that your reason? The Children? Their future? 59
I stooped to the silent Earth and lifted a handful of her dust 148
I take as my master, not you nor myself nor the past 66
It was as if myself sat down beside me 3
It was you, the glowing youth that went forth 56
I want a woman for the adventure 92
I was as a sieve for the wind this morning 41

Last night in the theater 146
Late, and lonely and faint for sleep 101
Let nothing bind you 5
Looking down on Earth 143
Love 86

My life does not belong to me 22

Neither from the woe 39
Not until you find a meaning in yourself 122
Now the day dies and the workers trudge homeward 130

Of old, the psalmist said that the morning stars sing together 23
Oh, my being, opening into the dazzle of sunrise 85
O my most bitter mood 30
On a downy feather of the dove, Earth, I lie 118
Once I freed myself from my duties to tasks and people and went down to the cleansing sea 13
One would think the dead were burying the living, not the living the dead 55
Only on the days when my life has ebbed 120

Priests are in bad odour 46
Push off the clinging arms 21

Sin! sin! sin! 11
Sky-lover 117

Index of First Lines

PAGE

Starless and still..... 115
Stuck in the mire of many philosophies..... 25
Sun, with a million eyes..... 109

That bothered you, didn't it?..... 131
The æsthetes read and wax contemptuous or enthusiastic. 32
The babe is the beautifully cunning dust that desires and breathes 104
The dreamer in me keeps on dreaming..... 152
The haunted heart beseeches me..... 20
The love of man for woman and woman for man..... 17
The old hag sat on the park bench, picking her teeth.... 45
There comes a moment when to believe is not enough... 49
There was a man called pure..... 33
The sea is itself: it does not fear to be calm or stormy.. 63
The sea put a finger of foam on its lips of waves..... 65
These are the days of immense and solitary strength.... 134
The sea whispers to me of women..... 64
The soul is an abyss..... 48
The wheeling heavens, at this moment wheeling..... 28
The world is wild..... 111
The writer of many books was weary..... 132
They set the slave free, striking off his chains..... 24
This starry world and I in it..... 141
Though I am little as all little things..... 103

Vast is this city, concealing fires behind its walls, its streets and its faces..... 121

We spat on the dirt and the flesh..... 51
We, that are the very waters of change..... 67
What does the woman sing to the love-seed under her heart? 139
What face lifts, so perfect in profile?..... 99
What is the tiny flame of my match..... 63
What song shall I sing to the heavens?..... 113
When a woman is wanted..... 95
When from the brooding home..... 74
When I get *there,* so I told myself..... 120
When in the death of love..... 15
Where bides brotherhood..... 47
Where love once was, let there be no hate..... 16
Where may she of the hall-bedroom spend the love-hour? 90
Who can measure the agony of man?..... 68
Who is the runner in the skies..... 145

Index of First Lines

	PAGE
Whose adored one is this? For her beauty walks on light to the ends of the Earth	129
Why am I restless?	29
Why did you hate to be by yourself	7
Would you lay a pattern on life, and say, Thus shall ye live?	26
Yea, there are as many stars under the Earth as over the Earth	150
You and I in the night, spied on by stars	83
You are proud and strong, lion-hearted girl	126
You blame yourself	57
You cannot exile me	121
You play the queen	127
Your smile is very sweet: yet it baffles me	124

DATE DUE

#47-0108 Peel Off Pressure Sensitive

3 5134 00141 0055

PS 3529 .P6 S6 1914
Oppenheim, James, 1882-1932.
Songs for the new age

811
062s1

OREGON STATE LIBRARY
Salem
RULES FOR BORROWERS

BOOKS LENT through local public libraries or traveling libraries are subject to the rules governing those libraries.

TRANSPORTATION CHARGES on books returned to the State Library must be paid by patron, if local library does not pay it; but use of books is FREE to all citizens of Oregon. Use return label to secure book rate.

BORROWERS.—Adults become registered borrowers upon application for service. Minors should give signature of parent or teacher with first request. Give rural route or necessary information if package is to be delivered to country address. WRITE NAME PLAINLY. Individuals having access to a free city or county library must borrow through them. Loans for schools should be requested or authorized by principal or school librarian.

TIME KEPT.—Date a book is due and transaction number are stamped on date slip. Material not reserved for others may be renewed upon request PROVIDING transaction number, date due, author, title and call number are all given. Material issued for less than 28 days may not be renewed.

LOST AND DAMAGED BOOKS MUST BE PAID FOR.— Unless an IMMEDIATE REPORT of books damaged or number not received is made to the State Library, the borrower is responsible for all items indicated on the shipment notice as sent with each package.

BOOKS MUST NOT BE MARKED, MUST BE KEPT CLEAN, AND CORNERS OF LEAVES MUST NOT BE TURNED DOWN.